

# TRIBUTARY



Water Education and Conservation Newsletter

Summer 2003

## Utah Water-Wise Plant Tagging Program

**By Dr. Teresa Cerny, Assistant Professor, Utah State University**

The Utah Division of Water Resources and Utah State University Extension Services, along with several cooperating agencies, are proud to announce the launch of their newest public education program.

The Utah Water-Wise Plant Tagging Program provides nurseries with a list of water-wise plants suitable for Utah's climate, and free plant tags to mark the plants in their shops.



"This program will allow customers at nurseries to make more informed decisions about what they will buy and plant in their yards," says Molly Waters, Water Conservation Coordinator for

the Utah Division of Water Resources and one of the administrators of this program.

Residents of Utah will be able to go into their local nursery, locate tags with the bright yellow picture of Utah, and know that they are buying a plant that is more suitable for this climate than other, more thirsty plants. Specific information for the plants, as well as a list of cooperating nurseries, is available at the program's website,

**[www.waterwiseplants.utah.gov](http://www.waterwiseplants.utah.gov).**

"We are very excited about this program," says Dr. Teresa Cerny, Assistant Professor at Utah State University and an administrator of this program.

"Representatives from various agencies have been working on this program for several months - we feel it is a great public education campaign".

The program was officially launched at the Wasatch Community Garden's Annual Plant Sale, on May 10<sup>th</sup> at the Garfield School (1838 S 1500 E, SLC).

**Cooperating agencies:** Utah Division of Water Resources; Utah State University Center for Water-Efficient Landscaping; Utah State University Extension; Utah Nursery and Landscape Association; Red Butte Garden; Salt Lake City Corporation; Sandy City; Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District; US Bureau of Reclamation Utah Botanical Center; Utah Native Plant Society; Washington County Water Conservancy District; and West Jordan City.

## Turf 101

**By Molly Waters, Water Conservation Coordinator, DWRe**

Although all grass is green, there are many different varieties of turf that will grow in Utah. These types can be placed in two main categories: Cool season and Warm season turf.

### Cool Season Turf

Kentucky bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) is the most common type of grass used in Utah. Cool season grasses characteristically endure cooler weather better than other types of grass. For instance, a Kentucky bluegrass lawn will stay green later in the season when temperatures begin to cool off. However, cool season grasses do not tolerate the heat of summer very well. If left to their own devices, cool season grasses will go dormant during the hottest months of the year.

### Warm Season Turf

Warm season turfs are most common in Southern Utah. These grasses include Bermudagrass (*Cynodon dactylon*) and Zoysiagrass (*Zoysia*

*japonica*). These grasses can tolerate the extremely warm temperatures common in Southern Utah. Because these grasses are heat tolerant, they will not go dormant in the summer. However, because they are heat-loving grasses, warm season turfs have little tolerance for cold weather. A warm season grass will normally go dormant when temperatures begin to chill considerably.

One beneficial aspect of warm season grasses is that they generally use less water than cool season species.

Although Bermudagrass is a popular grass for Southern Utah, it is listed as a noxious weed in Utah, and is only allowed to be planted in Washington County.

### **Alternative Turf**

There are several good alternatives to the standard warm and cool season turfs found in Utah. These include:

- Buffalograss
- Tall Fescues
- Groundcover

#### Buffalograss:

Buffalograss (*Buchloë dactyloides*). Is a warm season turf that can be planted in any area in Utah, and it has many positive attributes. For instance, its color is a rich gray/blue that compliments many landscape plants. It does not grow very tall, making mowing completely optional. When it goes to seed, a quaint little bell-shaped seed head hangs from many of the stalks, making a decorative statement in your landscape.

One drawback to Buffalograss - it's not very cold tolerant. It takes longer in the spring to green up, and is among the first plants to go dormant in the fall. However, the dormant color of the Buffalograss is a uniform gold color- not the brown, dead looking color of dormant Kentucky bluegrass.

#### Tall Fescues:

Other alternative turfgrasses of note are the cool season turf-type Tall Fescues. This type of grass uses a notably less amount of water than

conventional Kentucky bluegrasses, and can even more wear. The texture of the grass is somewhat more coarse than other lawns, but the actual difference in negligible.

#### Groundcovers:

Of course, another 'alternative turf' is no turf at all! Using a low water use groundcover such as Woolly Thyme (*Thymus psuedolanuginosdus*) with its beautiful color and fragrance or Trailing Fleabane (*Erigeron flagellaris*) with its delicate white flowers is a great way to save water and keep your landscape green.

For more information on turf grasses, call your local extension agent or visit the Governor's Water Conservation Website, [www.conservewater.utah.gov](http://www.conservewater.utah.gov).

## **Calendar of Events**

### ***Water Conservation Classes, Workshops, Etc.***

*For general information regarding water conservation and education events, please visit [www.conservewater.utah.gov](http://www.conservewater.utah.gov).*

### **Jul 12 & Sep 13**

#### **Jordan Valley Water Conservancy District Garden Fair**

Annual Garden Fair held at the Conservancy District's Demonstration Gardens (8215 S 1300 W, West Jordan). Demonstrations, booths, and live radio remotes... fun for the whole family! Runs from 8 am – noon.

### **Thru September**

#### **Water-Use Workshops**

Targeted toward public agencies, institutions, government, commercial business, HOA's, etc., the workshop covers topics vital to maintaining your irrigation system and landscape reasonably in this time of drought and beyond. Workshops are held throughout the summer in various locations. For more information, please call Lori Johnson at 435-797-2255.



